



ST. BERNARD PARISH

MARRIAGE PREPARATION GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

The parishioners of St. Bernard congratulate you on your engagement, and your desire to be married in the Catholic Church! This guide will assist you to ensure that all items needed for your wedding are completed and in order.

Note that couples wishing to marry at St. Bernard should be active, registered members of the parish for at least **three months** prior to beginning plans for marriage. An active parishioner is defined as one that attends Mass regularly, who participates in the Sacramental life of the Church and who financially supports the parish to the best of one's ability.

If there are any previous bonds of marriage involved (for either the man or woman), this information must be brought forth as soon as possible, as these bonds will need to be investigated through the annulment process. Annulments can take as long as 16-18 months, so it is essential to begin this process as soon as possible. **Note that a wedding cannot be officially placed on the parish's calendar until a decree of nullity is issued from the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal or the Tribunal of another Diocese.**

Following is a general outline of the process:

1. Initial Meeting with the Pastor. You will meet with the pastor of the parish to complete the Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire and officially schedule the date of your wedding. At this time, the marriage preparation materials will be handed out to you, and the pastor will review the materials with you.
2. Scheduling Diocesan Marriage Preparation Classes. The Diocese of Madison requires that all couples preparing for marriage take two courses that present the theological concepts of marriage and the practical aspects of married life. You can register for these classes on the diocesan website (see the handout included in the folder). More information on the classes is included in your folders.
3. Obtain copies of your baptismal certificate. For Catholics, a baptismal certificate dated within six months of the wedding date must be obtained from your parish of baptism. Call the parish where you were baptized and explain that you are to be married and need a copy of your baptismal certificate with current annotations. The parish office will prepare the certificate for you. You can either direct the parish to send the certificate directly to St. Bernard, or it may be sent to you and you can give it to the Pastor when you receive it. For baptized non-Catholics, a simple photocopy of your original certificate of baptism is



acceptable. If you do not have a copy, follow the same procedures as for the Catholic to obtain one.

4. Completion of the FOCCUS Inventory. The FOCCUS Inventory is a tool in which couples preparing for marriage can explore a host of issues and review areas of compatibility, or areas that may need additional discussion. You will work with a couple in the parish to complete the inventory and to review your results. The couple will forward a brief report to the Pastor for his review. The Pastor may schedule an additional meeting with you depending on the results.

5. Meeting with the Director of Liturgy. You will schedule a meeting time with our director of Liturgy and Pastoral Music. He will assist you with the musical selections for your wedding and provide helpful resources as you complete your Mass/liturgy worksheet. He will also serve as the principal accompanist on the day of your wedding. You should have your worksheet filled out and completed before meeting with the director.

6. Ensure that all items on the checklist are completed. Approximately six weeks prior to the wedding, review the checklist in your folder and ensure that all items are completed and checked off in preparation for your wedding.

FAQ

WEDDINGS AT ST. BERNARD

HOW WILL THE WEDDING REHEARSAL WORK?

Your rehearsal will be coordinated by a couple in the parish. Rehearsals are normally scheduled for 5:00pm unless a different time is requested. The rehearsal coordinators will go through the entire wedding, allowing adequate time for practice and to acquaint you and your wedding party with what will take place the following day. The rehearsal couple will also be present for the beginning of your wedding day to assist with organizing the procession and answering any questions that may arise before the wedding begins.

WHAT TIME CAN I SCHEDULE MY WEDDING? DO I HAVE TO CHOOSE A SATURDAY, OR IS ANOTHER DAY POSSIBLE?

Saturday weddings can be scheduled anytime between 11:30am and 1:30pm. Couples must have their pictures completed and be out of the church by 3:30pm so that we may prepare for the 4:30pm Mass that afternoon. If couples do not plan to take pictures after their wedding, there is the possibility that we may be able to accommodate a later start time (but not later than 2:00pm). Couples may also elect to be married on Friday evenings; Friday weddings are becoming more popular. Another day is also possible – please discuss with the Pastor.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WEDDING LITURGY AND A NUPTIAL MASS?

A wedding liturgy consists of the Liturgy of the Word and the Rite of Marriage. A Nuptial Mass consists of the Liturgy of the Word, the Rite of Marriage and the Liturgy of the

Eucharist. Couples from different faith traditions (eg. a Catholic and a Lutheran) would be advised to have a wedding liturgy. You may also elect to have a wedding liturgy if many of the guests will not be Catholic.

ARE WE ALLOWED TO PREPARE FOR THE WEDDING AT THE CHURCH?

Yes! There are separate areas for the bride and bridesmaids, as well as the groom and groomsmen. The Director of Liturgy will speak to you about these areas in greater detail.

I AM CLOSE TO ANOTHER PRIEST OR A DEACON – WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO HAVE THEM PRESIDE AT MY WEDDING?

Yes! Family or friends who are priests or deacons are welcome to preside at the wedding. Keep in mind that if it's a deacon, they can only preside at wedding liturgies (they cannot preside over the Liturgy of the Eucharist). Additional paperwork will need to be completed in order to accommodate this request – please inform the pastor early on so that arrangements can be made.

CAN I CHOOSE A DIFFERENT MUSICIAN FOR MY WEDDING?

The parish policy is that our Director of Liturgy and Pastoral Music will serve as the primary accompanist and soloist for all weddings. If you wish to bring in a different musician for your wedding, it must be done in consultation with the director. **Note that the \$150 stipend fee to the director will still need to be paid if you choose to use another musician.**

CAN I HAVE A UNITY CANDLE OR SAND AT MY WEDDING?

Unity candles, commingling of sand and other such practices have become a “commercialized” addition to weddings, and are not a part of the Rite of Marriage. These items are permitted at wedding liturgies, but are not permitted during a Nuptial Mass. Keep in mind that the symbol of unity is not candles or sand – it's YOU! You stand as the sacrament of unity in marriage. In Nuptial Masses, the unity you represent in your marriage, and the presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist should not be rivaled by other objects.

MY FIANCE AND I HAVE A SPECIAL DEVOTION TO OUR BLESSED MOTHER. MAY WE BRING FLOWERS TO PRESENT TO HER ON OUR WEDDING DAY?

Yes! This is a most acceptable practice. The director of liturgy can help you plan this part of your wedding.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BEST MAN AND MATRON OF HONOR?

Ordinarily, the best man and the matron of honor are the same people that sign the marriage license. Wisconsin state statutes require that those signing the license be at least 18 years of age. If you wish to have a best man or matron of honor that does not meet this requirement, you will need to choose someone who meets the state requirements to sign the license.

DO YOU HAVE A POLICY FOR PHOTOGRAPHY DURING THE WEDDING?

Photography is welcomed during the Mass/liturgy. However, there are to be no photographers in the sanctuary at any time during the wedding. The sanctuary includes everything above the main step separating the main body of the church from the altar area. Photographers must remain on the main level of the church or in the choir loft. Still video cameras may be placed in an inconspicuous part of the sanctuary if desired.

CAN I HAVE AN AISLE RUNNER FOR MY WEDDING

Yes! Aisle runners are permitted, but it is the responsibility of the bride and groom to obtain one. It must be removed from the church at the end of the wedding. It will be the responsibility of the ushers to secure the aisle runner at the front of the church so as to ensure it doesn't roll up as it is brought down. Cloth and paper runners are acceptable; plastic runners are not permitted at the request of our insurer. The aisle is approximately 90 feet in length.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ROLE OF AN USHER?

In addition to assisting with the seating of guests prior to the wedding, ushers are responsible for going through the main church, as well as the areas occupied by the bridal party and pick up any extra programs, trash or other items that might be laying around and properly disposing of them. There are trash receptacles located throughout the church. Large items (aisle runner, pew bows, etc.) should be taken either by the ushers or a member of the bridal party after the wedding is completed.

CAN I THROW RICE, BIRDSEED OR OTHER ITEMS AFTER THE WEDDING

Due to the quick turnaround we must make for the evening Mass, the throwing of rice, birdseed, flower petals or other items is not permitted.

CAN I BRING FOOD WITH ME ON THE DAY OF THE WEDDING?

Yes, food and non-alcoholic beverages are permitted on the campus for your wedding. It is highly encouraged that the bridal party eat something before the wedding is to begin. This will lessen the risk of someone passing out during the wedding. Absolutely **NO** alcoholic beverages of any kind are allowed on campus. Couples celebrating a Nuptial Mass should plan their meal around the one-hour fast obligation before the wedding begins.

CAN I HAVE FLOWERS AT MY WEDDING? WHAT KINDS?

You are welcome to have flowers at your wedding, but they must be in keeping with the existing sanctuary decorations that are already in place. For example, if you're planning to be married in the fall, your flowers/decorations should match the arrangements that are already present in the sanctuary. Sanctuary decorations will not be removed for weddings.

WHERE AND WHEN DO WE GET OUR MARRIAGE LICENSE?

Please see the handout in your folder that discusses this in greater detail. The examples provided are for Dane County – other counties have similar requirements. You should apply

for a license in the county in which one of you has legal residence. Licenses must be obtained at least six days prior to the wedding. It is advisable to apply approximately 30 days before the wedding takes place to ensure there are no problems obtaining the license.

WHEN DO WE SIGN OUR MARRIAGE LICENSE?

The marriage license is usually signed at the rehearsal. You have signed the license already; it will be signed by the best man and the matron of honor on the night of the rehearsal. If you'd like a staged picture on the day of the wedding, that can be arranged.

CAN WE HAVE A WEDDING PROGRAM FOR OUR WEDDING?

Yes! Wedding programs are common, and are welcome at the Mass/liturgy. It is the couple's responsibility to create the programs. Please use the enclosed sheet to help you create your programs. **Before the programs go to print, the Pastor is to review them.**

ARE RECEIVING LINES ALLOWED?

Yes! You are welcome to have a receiving line after the completion of your wedding. The bride and groom sometimes choose to return to the church and dismiss each pew so they can personally greet everyone present. This practice is also acceptable. Receiving lines are usually formed at the Atwood Ave. entrance, and customarily include the parents of the bride and groom and the bride and groom themselves.

CAN WE WRITE OUR OWN MARRIAGE VOWS?

You can, but they cannot be used at the church. The words used at the Mass/liturgy are part of the Sacrament's fundamental structure, and cannot be altered. You may, however, choose to write your own vows and exchange them with each other at the rehearsal; that would be an opportune time to do so.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS TO HAVE MY WEDDING AT ST. BERNARD?

Our fee schedule is as follows:

- \$100 payable to the rehearsal couple: Mickey and Tara Reynolds
- \$150 payable to the director of liturgy for preparing and playing the music: Ken Sosinski
- \$200.00 to the parish for **non-parishioners**. Parish members are encouraged to give a gift of their choosing for the parish.
- If you choose, a gift for the pastor (the amount at your discretion).

Stipends must be received at the parish at least one week prior to the wedding taking place. They may be mailed to the pastor's attention or given to the pastor directly.